

Dear Governor Quinn,

I truly appreciate your interest in this very important issue, the closure of the Centralia Animal Disease Lab (CADL). I am very passionate about the role that this lab plays in animal health (food and companion animal) and public health in our State as a whole NOT just Southern Illinois. I have given a lot thought on what would be the key issues to address in this letter to you, House Speaker Madigan and Senate President Cullerton. The agriculture and veterinary communities have been working with their State Representatives and Senators to address this issue of the CADL closure since early April of this year. Senate Bill 3292 was passed to safeguard the income stream from the State's Animal Disease Labs so that their money can be reinvested in their facilities, equipment, programs, and staffing. The CADL also proposed significant fee increases in an effort to rely less on State funding. I submit that what better use can the State have for its tax revenue than safeguarding the health of the animals that feed its citizens, protecting its citizens from zoonotic diseases and bioterrorism and guaranteeing the safety of the food and water its citizens eat and drink. I was saddened to hear that your office had not heard a lot of opposition to the CADL closure. Many professionals, farmers and just plain citizens are too busy in their daily schedules to make time to voice their concerns. Many just assume it will all be out of their control anyway. Which it may be if the CADL closure is just a means of punishing downstate legislators. What happened to leaders who did was right for their State and/or region just because it was their duty and the honorable thing to do? Now it appears that we must calculate every decisions political impact. How many lives of our State's citizens are we willing to jeopardize through the closure of the CADL? How many livestock operations in Southern Illinois are we willing to strand without proper veterinary diagnostic lab services? Do we not care that animal agriculture accounts for 5% of our State's economy, 99,000 jobs, and \$27 billion in total impact. I met an elderly farmer that had brought a corn sample to the lab to ensure that his drought stressed corn would not kill his cattle. He needed a quick answer in order make the decision to harvest it for silage or not. He could not afford to wait 5 to 7 days for another lab to get back to him. By then the corn's moisture and sugar content would have dropped in this unusually hot year to a level that would have made his corn crop completely useless. What is the dollar value on this one man's corn crop?

I guess I am an optimist in that I won't give up until the bitter end. If CADL closes, it will be a bitter end because our State will no longer have that small cadre of professionals safeguarding this once proud State's agricultural assets, companion animals, or its citizens. Prior to my testimony at the legislative hearing held at Kaskaskia College I visited on the phone with Dr. Ted Valli, the former dean of the Univ. of IL College of Veterinary Medicine. His summary statement was that Illinois was "just geographically too large to be served by only one animal diagnostic lab". Dr. Valli's home state of California has 5 "Animal Diagnostic Labs". However, the powers that be in California allowed that State Lab Directors to change the names of their labs to better reflect their roles in animal and public health. I spoke to Dr. Gene Niles, the director at the CADL, today. He was "knee deep" in corn from the drought stressed fields of Illinois' corn fields, but he indicated he would be more than happy to visit with you. I will fax a copy of a statement that he had already prepared about the lab and its mission. The CADL performed approximately three times the number of necropsies and had three times the number of tests last year (over 400,000 tests). The State just invested over \$700,000 in a new roof on the CADL last year, but the taxpayers of the State still owe \$1.4 million on the Galesburg Animal Disease Lab (GADL). As I understand it, one of the main reasons that you chose to close the CADL over the GADL is that the latter was a Biosecurity Level 3 (BL3) lab. The BL3 lab was completed in 2001 at a cost of approximately \$350,000 from Homeland Security, but it has yet to be used. This part of the GADL was not even certified to be used until June of this year. The Centralia lab director indicated that the CADL is considered BL2+ or the equivalent of a BL3 lab if they keep the doors closed between the different parts

of the lab. The animal digester unit at the GADL is similar in design and purpose as the one at the CADL, but the one in Galesburg is located in the main building so that whenever it is used the entire main GADL building smells of cooked cow, etc. Consequently, this important biosecurity and environmental safeguard is rarely used. The digester at the Centralia Lab is situated in a separate outside building, and it can be used on every carcass without a problem. In comparing the two labs, it was reported that the Galesburg Lab had concrete floors while the Centralia Lab did not. However, this was not true. CMS recently did an inspection at the Centralia facility and found that the floors are concrete with the exception of the stairwells and reported that the facility is in excellent condition. Incidentally, the same contractor built both labs. The CADL is much more than a good facility. It has a proud tradition of excellence and serving Illinois' citizens since 1947. It is also no accident that our leaders located one lab in Centralia close to our epicenter of animal agriculture in the southern part of our State and one lab in Galesburg near to the areas of livestock concentration in the northwestern part of our State with the College of Veterinary Medicines Diagnostic Lab taking care of the Central Illinois region. I am amazed at how some politicians think this a luxury we can no longer afford. Our support for lab system is NOT where our excessive spending is occurring in this State.

The CADL is strategically located in the epicenter of animal agriculture in Southern Illinois. Clinton County has the largest livestock production in our State. With the CADL gone the time between detection and diagnosis of an animal health problem could be so long as to cost the State many more millions of dollars than we will ever realize in savings. I will also attach an article concerning the economic impact of a mock Foot and Mouth Disease Virus outbreak in California. In summary, as the diagnostic delay went from 7 days to 22 days the number of slaughtered cattle went from 8,700 to 260, 400 and the median national loss in total agricultural surplus ranged from \$2.3 billion to \$69 billion. Both the Galesburg and Centralia labs are currently qualified to prepare tissues for diagnostics for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease). It is critically important to keep this capability in our State near our largest cattle region. Multiple hours or days of shipment time for some tissues especially brain will prevent these samples from being diagnostically useful (aka they will be soup). How would that look in the media if our State government closed the only lab in the southern two-thirds of our State in which the Federal government has accredited to do this work? I have been told the NVSL would not likely grant us another chance. Without a National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) lab (the GADL is attempting to regain their certification as long as they can prove proficiency in these tests) where would the Federal money go for federally administered disease monitoring programs go? It would not be going to Illinois labs. Where would all the farmers needing nitrate levels on their drought stressed corn turn to for quick results to salvage some value out of their corn crop before it has no value? The delays in diagnostic results due GADL being a four-hour drive or more from our area would lead to many diagnostic failures. How many reportable diseases will be missed? How many dairy farmers will be willing to drive a cow four hours or more to the GADL on a hot summer day? I suppose on some of these really hot days we have been having the cow will rupture somewhere around Springfield. If just three 100 cow dairies had dramatic mortalities due to inaccurate or absent testing, the total dollars saved by our State would be negated by the losses experienced by these farm families. If the CADL is gone there will no longer be a water quality lab that will be able to get small communities water supplies back going in a timely fashion after a boil order. There are more than a 100 water suppliers that depend on the CADL for prompt service even on the weekend. The cost to small Southern Illinois hospitals, nursing homes, etc. to go days using bottled water waiting on results would be another major negative with regard to true saving. If your family discovered a dead bat in your backyard where your small children play, you would no longer have an option here in Southern Illinois to take that bat for rabies testing since there was not a confirmed human bite exposure. A very timely example that demonstrates the public health importance of the Centralia Lab is the case where a women woke up

with a bat attached to her lip. She woke up frantic, ripped off the bat and screamed for her husband. He killed the bat and took her and the bat to St. Mary's Hospital in Centralia. The hospital directed him to take the bat to the CADL. It was accessed into their system at 7:56 AM and their professional staff went to work, just like they have for the last 65 years. The bat's testing was completed at 11 AM, and it was rabid! A piece of State infrastructure like this close to the most populous region in the southern part of our State is of critical life-saving importance.

There would no longer be a facility here in Illinois that would be able to test for Cervid Wasting Disease (deer) or Scrapie (sheep). Without the CADL there also would not be a single animal toxicology lab in our State and this function also would not be transferred to Galesburg. Without the CADL there will be only one lab in the entire United States able to test for arsenic. This is a test the Russians require for all poultry meat being shipped to their country. Without the CADL the Illinois exporters of premium swine genetics around the world will have to look for another lab to do the export testing these countries require. The Chinese will not be happy. Is it worth jeopardizing millions of dollars of Illinois export? If you close the Centralia Lab the State's veterinary community will no longer have a complete laboratory to be a part of their IVERT program designed to mobilize in the event of man-made or natural disasters. Does Illinois really have to stoop so low that we have to depend on other state's infrastructure in the face of a catastrophic animal or public health emergency? What if these other labs are already overwhelmed?

Our State diagnostic labs and the professionals that staff them should not be struggling for funding for their reagents, scientific equipment, or staffing. Their mission is a constitutionally mandated function of our State government. When money is spent supporting our labs, the result is greater service to our State's livestock industry, a reason for expansion of animal agriculture in our State, greater biosecurity for both our human and animal populations and preservation of the economic activity that the labs create within the borders of our State. Out of a 31 billion dollar Illinois budget you will never be able to convince me that it is fiscally necessary to close the CADL or to under-fund any of our State's Animal Diagnostic Labs considering that just one part of their mission helps protect a 27 billion dollar industry. We seem to be able to justify giving over half of the State's tax money to some form of social welfare program. We need to start rewarding people in this State that work hard, take care of their own families, pay taxes, lead moral lives and make ethical decisions. Illinois government could start by giving them good governance. Keeping the Centralia Animal Disease Lab open would be a great first step! Thanks again for your support and interest! PLEASE call me with any questions or your thoughts on what can be done to save the Centralia Lab!

Sincerely,

Edmar P. W. Schreiber DVM
July 27, 2012